

EXCITEMENT CITY UNLIMITED

#4

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Meat is Murder

EXCITORIAL

I thought I'd bidenise one of my favourite zines (in this case Praxis) and do a front page editorial. It's 8:15. Barbara is cooking spiced yogurt to go over steamed broccoli, cauliflower and yellow squash. She wants a new job. Does anyone know of any public librarian openings near where they live? Hooperman has been preempted for some Napoleon & Josephine schlock. Sigh, it's just typing and cuddles tonight.

I have three players for a regular international Diplomacy game. Take a bow, Martin Kloosterman (Australia), David Stone (Trinidad) and Edward Ainsworth (England). This will be a "Seven Nations" game with only one player from a single country. I expect the US and Canadian slots will fill really easily. I'll probably rely on Europeans for the last two places. I'm still looking for a GM. Mark Nelson, Andrew England and Melinda have kindly volunteered but I was really looking for an American or Canadian who isn't running loads of games already. Mind you, Mark, Andrew and Melinda are a pretty impressive bunch. However I would like to give a chance to somebody who isn't as heavily committed as the above three hobby stalwarts.

In case you wondering (well, you probably weren't but never mind) the International Subscription Exchange is running very smoothly. After screaming that no Americans were using the ISE, US requests have boomed leaving me with a small surplus. I've taken in \$170 and sent out \$158.50 since taking over from Steve Knight. I'm sure it will come as no surprise that the most requested North American zine is ECU and the most requested British zine is Prisoners of War. Running these services has their perks, you know...

This issue is a little too heavy on politics so next time I may well write a couple of games articles and leave the politics for the letter column.

How do you get a stock broker out a tree? Cut the rope...

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It was the worst week of Reagan's presidency since he was shot. But at least then he knew what had hit him.

((I hadn't intended to print anything else on the subject of Robocop. However I received this review which I feel deserves printing, since Carol is an entertaining writer with a good knowledge of films.))

ROBOCOP: THE LAW-ENFORCEMENT LAZARUS

by Carol Naylor

Robocop hasn't yet been released in Britain. The premiere is sponsored by no less a body than the British Film Institute and will take place as part of the grand finale to their 31st London Film Festival at 10am on Sunday Nov. 29th at the Odeon Leicester Square (and they're not paying me for that plug). However, the sort of audience Orion hope to attract at that time of the day is beyond me. The only people I know who are up that early on a Sunday morning are all in church.

The main detail which struck me when I saw the film (and which has not been noted by anyone else yet) was the similarity of its bleak settings to those in the American Max Headroom programme. However, this is simply not a question of duplicating a man's personality but of destroying it in order to subvert the mind and body to one's own sinister ends. Furthermore, unlike Headroom, the good guys do not triumph. In fact, for much of the time we are not too sure who they are. Morality in the world of Robocop has, like all other supposedly good forces, been subcontracted and here is invested in the micro-chip which dispenses a very rough brand of justice with mechanical dispassion. However, finally even "the micro-chip with no name" (as it has been dubbed by advance publicity) is flawed since it cannot judge its creators (rather like a fundamentalist). In truth he is at the complete command of his superiors and his only decisions concern whether or not to use his gun.

It is interesting to see that responses to the film are so mixed. Perhaps because it hits so close to its mark. A Village Voice critic dubbed Robocop "The Thinking Man's Rambo" and I think that whilst many abhor the vicarious kick that other, lesser, mortals may get from Stallone's antics, they may find that, despite themselves, they derive similar satisfaction from watching Robocop dispensing fitting street justice to rapists, muggers, sadists and others of their ilk.

Art is but a few steps ahead of reality for much of the film. In the UK there are plans to privatise the prison system in much the same way that the Detroit police have been subcontracted in this plot and the L.A. Prison service will soon be using a robotic warden bearing a disturbing resemblance to ED 209, the machine which Robocop supercedes.

Sadly, the characters are all fairly superficial. The street criminals are seedy, grasping, repellent vermin to a man. The corporate executives are as corrupt and oily as one would expect with that irritating veneer of civility which is only broken during the sequence in the Gents where the older exec. threatens the younger yuppie, grabbing him, not by the collar but something a bit more vital. The only character the audience can begin to relate to is Murphy/Robocop and he is supposed to be characterless. Interestingly he only begins to "dysfunction" (in the company's terminology) when his wiped human memory begins to return. This is the turning point in the film when he starts to tackle that old bugbear: "The System": that faceless group of bureaucrats who delight in frustrating the individual's

attempts to retain his integrity. That certainly was frustrating since I think every variation on this theme must have been worked out by now. However it was gratifying to watch Robocop beat ED 209 by the simple expedient of running down a flight of stairs. ED, it appears, suffers from severe "Dalek Syndrome".

After taking on his creators, Robocop removes his forbidding mask and begins to revert to Murphy, his face almost floating above the mass of wires and electrodes that are the rest of his body. The audience is finally forced to face the fact that this character has a soul which even corporate machinations cannot destroy.

For me the most unsettling sequence was not violent in the gory sense. When Murphy is shot, we follow events through his eyes and die and are reborn with him. The lights go down, we hear the resuscitation team give up and determine the exact time of death and then we reawake to an argument between a doctor and an executive on whether or not to amputate a perfectly healthy arm in the case of corporate expediency (the arm gets amputated).

Basically the film is an allegory for the present, indicating like many others (including Blade Runner, Demon Seed and even Logan's Run) in a particularly gory fashion, the dangers of relying on technology to solve all our problems regardless of their nature. However, it extends the limits of its message to include the evils of the corporate mentality with a picture of the board room jungle which is far from being science fiction.

THANKSCAROL/THANKSCAROL/THANKSCAROL/THANKSCAROL/THANKSCAROL/THANKSCAROL/THANKSCAROL/TH

WAITING LISTS

Artichoke Hearts/ International Cline 9

Thanks to all of you who sent in preference lists and opening statements. Unfortunately, I've not heard from Colin Grubb. Could Martin Kloosterman submit a pref. list and opening statement in case Colin doesn't respond to my reminder? I also need an opening statement from Walter Compton. We should start in a couple of weeks.

Stab: GM - yours truly

Derwood Bowen, Doug Brown, Glenn Petroski

Progress is slow but sure here. Four more wanted. No gamefee.

Downfall of the Lord of the Rings: GM - yours truly

Bruce Geryk, Doug Brown, Cathy Ozog, Rod Walker

Oops, I just lost two people here! Four needed. No gamefee.

Railway Rivals: GM Brian Longstaff

Brian seems keen so let's have another game.

There's no gamefee for RR as such. However, the maps cost about \$2 and Brian charges one International Reply Coupon per season to be sent with orders. Deadlines are 6-7 weeks. Standbys are desperately needed!

Retreats: English f bel & a lon retreat otb, French a bur-par

Builds/Adjustments

Barbary: builds a mor
 England: removes f ska
 Germany: builds a kie, a mun

Persia: builds a jor
 Russia: builds a war

Austria: (Kevin Tighe)
 a con holds

Barbary: (Jake Walters)

a alg-sah, a mor-alg, f nao-wao, f spanc holds, f lpl-wal, f lon s f lpl-wal

England: (David Anderson)

f swe holds

France: (Jeff Hoffman)

a bur s a par, a par s a bur

Germany: (Mike Pustilnik)

a edi holds, f hol-nth, f bel s f hol-nth, a tyr-ven, a pie s a tyr-ven,

a vie-tri, a kie-mun, a mun-tyr, f bal-swe, a den s f bal-swe, f stpnc holds

Italy: (Robert Acheson)

a bur-mar, a gas s a bur-mar, f wms-tys, f aeg s Persian f smy-con,

a ser-bul, a gre s a ser-bul, a tri-ven, a alb-tri, f cre-ion

Persia: (John Crosby)

f sms c a jor-lib, a jor-lib, a tun s a jor-lib, f ant-wao, f gos-ion,

f smy-aeg, a arm-ank

Russia: (Conrad von Metzke)

f sev-bla, a war-gal, a rum s Italian a ser-bul, a bud-ser, a ukr-sev

Turkey: (Doug Brown)

f bulec-con, a ank s f bulec-con

Retreats: English f swe-bot/fin/nwy/ska, Turkish f bulec eliminated

Games Notes

David Anderson has resigned from the game so could Jack McHugh (730 Union St., Apt 8, Allentown, PA 18101-2212) submit orders for England? Thanks!

You all seem happy about continuing this game in ECU so here it is.

Deadline: Saturday, December 12th

Press

Italy-Barbary: That type of one center move really pisses me off.

Italy-Persia: I can't do much about Crete but I can offer you unopposed access through the Ionian.

HELP! HELP! HELP!

I am in desperate need for standbys for both my Cline 9 games. Remember you receive three free issues if your standby orders are used. In addition, I will also give anyone a free issue for just joining the standby pool. This is a limited offer so take me up on it now!

LETTUCE

Andrew Poole I too am rather interested in the Cline variants. Having played Cline II, I then redesigned Fred's Cline IV to create Cline V. Subsequently a UK designer created two more versions. So, by my calculation, yours is at least Cline VIII. Indeed, I've been seriously considering doing a Cline VIII myself.

Fred Davis Your and Mike Pustilnik's design cannot be called "Cline VII", since that designator has already been given to your countryman David Rothery, who published both Cline VI and Cline VII in Britain in 1985. I will enclose my flyer listing all the known recent versions of Cline as of November 1986 (from Bush), as well as a set of the rules/maps for Cline VI & VII, for your review, before your game starts. There are several differences from your design especially in the area of Persia-Arabia and Russia, plus Iceland is now a SC. I think either VI (with an Iceland SC) or VII (with a Poland SC) would make excellent games.

I will tentatively give your design the title of "Cline 9-Man VIII", with a NAVB designator of "cn12/09". Please let me know whether you're going to play VI, VII, or VIII (your design), and whether there are to be any further changes in the design you printed in ECU before I make the designator "official". Thanks.

((Thanks for the designator, Fred. There are going to be no changes in the variant I published for the Artichoke Hearts' game, which should be starting up in a few weeks time. Would you believe that this is the first time I've revised a variant myself? However, I do insist that my version is officially titled Cline 9-Person...

I reckon there's enough interest in combining the recent Cline versions to create a new state-of-the-art version. Next issue (hopefully - no promises!) I'll print a quick resume of all the latest Cline variations and we can start a round table discussion to draw up a "Definitive Cline 9". To start up, I veto any suggestion that it be called "Coolbop Cline"...

Meanwhile Brian has some news on the ECU international Railway Rivals game

Brian Longstaff The map I will be using is Map K, London and South East. American players should be able to purchase copies from the American RR rep, Conrad von Metzke, while UK players can get copies at 60p + 40p P&P from David Watts //

Being a fan of Golden Turkeys (really bad films and TV series), I'm going to name any games GMed by me after such monstrosities. This first is entitled "Spectreman" after a Japanese live-action (!) superhero TV series that makes "Plan 9 From Outer Space" look good! The GMS name for press and comments will be "Nit-Picker".

If response to this first game is good, I can easily be talked into Gming a second, a third etc...

((Is response good? It certainly is! The RR waiting list has filled effortlessly whilst my titanic efforts to fill my Downfall and Stab lists are faltering. Of course now I will need a standby or two. I'd be happy if you'd like to GM another game. How about a US map?))

((Meanwhile, I'm pleased to announce that I've gained another reader in Australia.))

Martin Kloosterman I'd be honoured to be the/a standby player in the Cline 9 game. // I found the rules for Downfall of the Lord of the Rings particularly interesting. I'd really like to be in a game of it (possibly as Mordor vs Americans of Neutral and Good persuasions since communication would probably be low between Evil and Good/Neutral anyway).

((I would love to oblige but I've already had a specific request to play Mordor already. Would you consider playing one of the other powers? Although I've not played the game, I expect Umbar or the Dwarves don't require as much Diplomacy as the rest of the powers. In any case, with the game running to five week deadlines, you should have time to do some quick diplomacy each season. I realise that this was originally planned as North Americans only game, but I may need the odd Australian to ensure that the game gets off the ground. When you start your new zine, why not feature Australia's first Downfall opening?))

Mike Siggins On business, I don't suppose you know what I am doing job wise but if you are in FX of some sort and given the ECU name, I think we have something in common.

I am working in corporate treasury as Costain Group's funds manager. I cover FX, money market deposits & loans, commercial paper and we have just gone to the Euromarket with a US\$ 50M bond issue. Anyway, enough about work.

What are my chances, short of marrying a native, of getting work over there in my/your field? Slim I would expect.

((I'm currently working in the Foreign Exchange/Money Markets Operations Dpt. of the Banca Commerciale Italiana. Basically, I'm one of those back office peons who does all the paperwork for the traders. If I choose to continue in this field, I suppose I shall try to work my way up to being a trader after being a positionist or some such similar "trader-assist" job in the dealing room proper. I do enjoy the fast-paced environment but I do think that the whole business of foreign exchange is inherently futile. It's certainly profitable but it is just pure financial speculation. It's not as if foreign exchange actually produces anything (except profits!) and I can't see how it adds to the sum of human happiness, except for the people it gainfully employs.

If you're interested in checking out the New York employment scene, I'd gladly give you details of the agencies I've used. There seems to be plenty of demand for experienced financial operations people. Whether the crash will cut the demand radically remains to be seen. Personally, I think entry-level openings will be cut back the most, if anything. Want to crash at my place for a short tourism and job-hunting holiday?

If you don't find any immediate openings, Barbara and I could always search for a few single American women. They are suckers for anyone with an English accent...))

((Speaking of people going abroad.))

Fred Davis I note that you are now coordinating possible travel plans from the US to Britain for next year's Worldcon. May I suggest that you may wish to include the assistance of Greg Ellis on this matter, as Greg is a professional travel agent. //

Also, Bill Young is going to be in England for a couple of months, beginning in either January or February. AS he's interested in attending WorldCon, if possible, he might be able to do some coordination work for you.

((Thanks for the help. Actually, coordination for Worldcon has been sorted out. The Manorcon committee are organising the actual con with their usual efficiency while I've been added on as American publicist and coordinator.

I'm going to ask Greg Ellis about group travel rates but I think it would be asking too much for anything else other than advice. He's also on the committee of the Texas Dipcon and, on top of that, I hear he and his wife are expecting their first kid. I'm not sure if group travel will work. After all, people will want to leave at different times from different locations and I'm not sure if there will be enough going to qualify for any discount. I reckon it will be unlikely but I certainly intend to look into it. I'm planning to spend most of my efforts on publicity and getting "Adopt-a-Yank" off the ground.

Joe Santella I noticed the advert in the Zine Register concerning Diplomacy Worldcon in Britain. I am seriously interested in attending and also in the Adopt-a-Yank scheme. My wife will probably also attend and may even play. If there's any update to this event, please contact me.

Pete Tamlyn This Diplomacy Worldcon sounds very jolly. There is, of course, no chance whatsoever that we will go, but it is nice to see the Hobby getting its act together (what else could we expect with you in charge). The "adopt a yank" scheme is also a good idea. Kat and I certainly enjoyed showing Gary Coughlan and Woody around London when they came over. Don't panic Britain, Americans are house trained.

Doug Rowling Your suggestion for low cost accomodation for Americans for Worldcon '88. Yep, I will have plenty of floor space (literally). I have some spare blankets and a sleeping bag. No beds as such, even for myself, and probably not much in the way of furniture either, though possibly a good collection of machine tools. Any visitors are welcome, though I guess that I wouldn't much want children in the flat. Should anyone want to visit Glasgow I could offer space, and possibly organise floor space in Edinburgh or St. Andrews. I fully intend to attend the con myself.

((At the moment the Adopt-a-Yank is not properly organised but there certainly seems to be plenty of interest! The way I see the scheme working is that I collect the names of Americans who want hosts, while the Manorcon committee find Brits who are willing to put up hobby people. I suspect Doug's offer may not suit Joe and his wife unless they want to visit Scotland too, but I'm sure quite a few other people would be interested.))

((I reckon the best approach would be to ask people what sort of accomodation they would be willing to settle for, ranging from sleeping bag/crash space to actual beds to directions to the nearest reasonably priced hotel. Likewise British people could tell the Manoroncon committee what they have available, and we could match as many people as we were able to. Does that sound workable? Of course, I will need a list of everyone who's intending to go over to Britain. At the moment I know Larry Peery and Jay Shufelt are definites. Who else? Bruce Linsey? Dick Martin? Cathy Ozog?))

Mark Nelson "The Pick of the Slime". At first I thought I wouldn't like it, so didn't read it. Having read it I can say it was quite interesting. How about an article on how the nominations are worked out - "US Politics Explained".

However, it would have been more interesting if it'd been a description of people in the U.S. hobby!!!

((Now there's an idea! What an intriguing thought. I could get into a lot of trouble writing something like that...))

Jake Walters I noted your comments on the Democratic presidential candidates. I live just a stone's throw from Mike Dukakis. In fact, I walk by his home every day as I drop my daughter at her nursery school. I've met him (jogging in the park) but that's all. Many of our neighbors do know the Dukakis family and say they are very nice people. As for his tenure as governor, the Duke, as he has known, has attracted a lot of high-tech industry to the area, which has resulted in 100% employment here. He also seems to be able to keep business happy in a very liberal state. He's taken on some left type groups and refused to give, which hasn't hurt him. Most of all, he's run a clean, tight ship without lots of or hardly any embarrassing gaffes.

I have no insight as to whether he'll use common sense on the foreign scene, or have the courage to deal with the deficit, but I don't see anyone more competent. Dukakis ought to win in New Hampshire, but after that I don't know.

((Dukakis is a reasonable candidate but there several things which worry me about his candidacy. Firstly, I don't think he can duplicate the Massachusetts success on the national level. His state has several economic advantages which the rest of the country does not enjoy. Massachusetts has an excellent educational and financial infrastructure as well as more than its fair share of federal military contractors. As a social democrat, if he can't deliver growth, his whole economic package is shot to hell. If by "left type groups" you mean the gay community, I don't like Dukakis' record. I don't think much of a man who ensures that gay couples are prohibited from fostering kids especially when there is a terrible shortage of foster parents.

On the other hand, he opposes the contras and SDI and supports further arms control so he's not all bad. Nevertheless, Jackson for Prez!))

Mike Hopcroft The prospect of Orrin Hatch even visiting the White House occasionally gets me jittery. Can you imagine what it would be like in his presidency - all fifteen minutes of it?

Alan Stewart You may find it strange to know that until as late as 1982 I considered myself a Democrat in American political terms, although a Reagan fan. Between 1966 and 1975 I was quite a strong Democrat. Even as late as 1985 I considered it equally likely that I would be supporting the Democratic candidate as the Republican in 1988. The Democrats irresponsibility over the Bork issue has proved the last straw, and as I could never bring myself to vote for anyone who joined what the President accurately called the Bork "lynch mob". I guess now would be about the time I would be changing my registration had I not done so already.

((Alan Stewart, the Adam Horowitz of the hobby? I'm fascinated to hear about your political evolution. Do you think your views have changed or the parties?

I seem to find myself on the left of American politics, which is rather disconcerting considering my rather wet, middle of the road politics in Britain. If the Democrats had not opposed Bork, I would dismissed them as a bunch of spineless jellyfish. I'm still amazed that Biden managed to get through the whole episode without any major screw-ups. I try to keep an open mind on the Republicans but the current bunch are just too depressing. Why doesn't Bob Packwood run, if only for the sake of variety?))

Jesse Jackson, as a candidate, reminds me of Ronald Reagan. They have the same weaknesses. I wouldn't bet on either in an All-Candidates-IQ-Test. Both have/had extremist "images" and little grasp of policy detail. Both have the same strengths - eloquence, commitment, and a genuine belief in a set of values by which they want to lead the nation.

Jesse's singular problem is his lack, total lack, of administrative experience. It must be expected that a Jackson administration would be one long Keystone Kops comedy of botchups, maladministration and corruption the like of which has never been seen before. ((Just like now really...))

This raises an interesting moral conundrum, as Jesse can accurately say that the reason he has not had the opportunity to develop the administrative expertise necessary to be President, is the racial prejudice that prevented him from embarking on a successful political career early, as a white equivalent would surely have done. When he came to Chicago from South Carolina and offered his political services to the Daley administration, he was offered a job as an expressway toll booth collector. In assessing his fitness for President, one could argue that the disabilities caused solely by racial prejudice should not be held against him ie that he should be considered, notionally, to have the experience he was improperly cheated out of. Whether one can go along with that or not depends on whether one sees the position of President as primarily a representative, in case which one could wish away such a thing as lack of experience, or as one requiring expertise, in which case one can't. Would you let a person fly a plane you were riding in, or operate on your brain, if told that he would have been fully competent to perform these tasks except for the racial discrimination that prevented him from acquiring the necessary education and training? I couldn't bring myself to, so even adopting a liberal frame of mind, I couldn't look favourably on him as a President.

((I must admit that my support for Jesse Jackson (such as it is) is mainly tactical. He would not make the best President but I'm hoping that he will have a substantial influence on the Democratic platform.

((Ideally I would like to see Jackson gain a cabinet seat in a Democratic administration, or perhaps use his national prominence to help him gain a governorship or a House or Senate seat.))

Thanks for a fascinating letter. Liberal angst: printing a letter about Jesse Jackson written by Alan Stewart and agreeing with it! Are we both being uncharacteristically reasonable or has one of us gone soft in the head?))

Carol Naylor Thought you may be interested in hearing about the new Dr Who. Reviews have necessarily been mixed. They seem divided between those raised on Jon Pertwee/Pat Troughton/Bill Hartnell and won't accept any substitute (the Tom Baker fans are also just learning to write as well) and those, who like me, thought Colin Baker did for D.W. what the Japs did for Pearl Harbour and are thankful for any replacement. Mercifully, Sylvester McCoy is a totally different Dr. but not obviously in reaction to Baker No. 2. (He's quite like Troughton actually).

((I have high hopes for Sylvester McCoy. If he's anything like Troughton he should be pretty good. I expect New Jersey Network will show the McCoy episodes after Christmas. They were the first channel in America to show the second Colin Baker season so I expect we won't have to wait too long.))

I suspect Nathan-Turner and the BBC are reluctant to shell out on flash sets until they're sure that they're onto a winner so its back to the gravel pits in Northampton again for the first story (no doubt taking care not to stumble over any stragglers from Blakes 7, Tripods etc). However the music's pretty striking and they've got some reasonable monsters. They've even got Kate O'Mara back as the Rani impersonating Bonnie Langford (which she does disturbingly well). They have however splashed out on a few big names including Richard Briers and Ken Dodd which is unusual. Let's hope they come cheaper than the sets!

That aside, I read in the latest edition of Starburst that we'll have to wait until 1991 to see the New Star Trek. Apparently the pilot's already been released on American TV but it's going to be treated like a film in the UK and released first on video with a three year hold on TV showing. This all makes the free advance publicity they've been having in the UK Sci-Fi mags all rather premature. Anyway if that's their attitude they can shove it as far as I'm concerned. I'll be blessed if I shell out for the video and I imagine enthusiasm for it will be spent by the time they deign to let the BBC have it. Sequels are rarely as good as the original and if it's good enough for the american viewing public, why are they trying to screw a few extra quid out of us for it? They'd be bloody annoyed if the BBC did the same for Dr Who! Sorry if I'm going on a bit but reading that (printed I might add next to yet another fawning interview with Majel Barrett) rather p---d me off.

((I hate to grind it in but Star Trek: The Next Generation is very well done. Barbara and I were not expecting much. When we heard that one of the crew would be an android named "Data" and another a thirteen year old, we were very dubious. However we have been pleasantly surprised. The new actors have made a good impression and I must admit that Lt. Data is a well thought out character and excellently acted. One problem is that, I feel, they are trying too hard to make the series handle serious themes and, consequently, the first few episodes have been a little too cerebral. One longs for the crew to ditch the prime directive for an hour and zap the Ferengi for once.))

((The special effects are lavish as one would expect from ILM. Apparently everyone in the company is a fan of the old series so Rodenberry reckoned he could extra special service from them for no additional cost. Overall we are impressed. It's great to be able to watch new episodes and not know how things are going to turn out.))

Mike Hopcroft If any of you in PAL territory are interested, I can make audio copies of STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION as I will be taping the series as it airs here in Portland. Commercials will, of course, be paused out. I'm sure some of you may know how to get camera copies. If so, welcome to what you have been submitting American DOCTOR WHO fans for quite some time now. I still remember the early, grainy camera copies I sat through avidly at video parties. Especially my first, which went 20 hours the night before a club meeting. That was several years ago, long before saturation point hit the American market. I'm still looking for someone to show clear copies of Blake's 7, Sapphire & Steel (which reportedly only exists in camera copies), or Worzel Gummidge (I've seen one delightful episode of that series and no more). If you can get ST:TNG in camera copy, more power to you. Let me know how you did it. Some of you may be trading new Trek for new Dr. Who. If I had my own video system, instead of borrowing a friend's, I would be interested in such a swap. Unfortunately it would be somewhat uneven; 14 half-hours of Who for 26 hours of STAR TREK.

Forgive me I babble, but I do seem to be enjoying the series immensely without really understanding why. Perhaps being a Who buff helped; I'm used to regeneration as a fact of life.

((By camera copy, do you mean a copy of the programme taken by video camera to circumvent the fact that British and American video recorder systems are incompatible? What on earth is "PAL territory"?)

Sapphire and Steel, now there was a fascinating, if obscure, series. I'm surprised it hasn't done the American PBS circuit. Where are all the Joanna Lumley and David McCallum fans?

Mike seems to be keen to get in contact with Dr Who fans in Britain. He runs a cute, scruffy fanzine called Not Up To Modern Graphics Standards or Nutmeg as Linda Courtenanche and I have termed it. Anyone interested should contact Mike at: 2190 W. Burnside #108, Portland, OR 97210. Ask for a copy of "Nutmeg" because Linda and I are hoping our acronym will stick.))

CALLITNUTMEGCALLITCALLITNUTMEGCALLITNUTMEGCALLITNUTMEGCALLITNUTMEGCALLITNUTMEGCA

RAILWAY RIVALS GAME OPENING

I now have five players for ECU's first RR game:

Conrad von Metzke, 5440 Baltimore Drive #166, La Mesa, CA 92042, USA
Doug Brown, PO Box 584, Penngrove, CA 94951-0584, USA
Melinda Holley, PO Box 2793, Huntington, WV 25727, USA
Mark Nelson, 11 Lancaster Grove, Kirkstall, Leeds, W. Riding, LS5 3DY, UK
Andrew England, 91 College Road, Somerton Park, S. Australia, 5044, Australia

Your GM: Brian Longstaff, 13 Woodfarm Drive, Sheffield, S. Yorks S6 5LW, UK

Brian should get in touch with you all shortly. See the letter column for more details.

THE PICK OF THE SLIME: PART II

THE REPUBLICANS

George Bush

I feel George Bush is the Walter Mondale of the Republican party. The similarities are striking. Bush is the current Vice-President, though he has been so quiet over the past few years that some people need to be reminded of this fact. Bush has the support of much of the G.O.P. machinery and he has raised a formidable war chest. Like Mondale, although he can draw on party loyalists, he invokes indifference in the public at large. He even has attracted the same, dreaded "wimp" tag. This may be due to the fact that he has all the charisma and presence of warmed-over porridge. It may be because he is having difficulties coming out from behind Reagan's shadow and projecting a distinct policy of his own. However the fact remains that, unlike other uncharismatic candidates like Dukakis for instance, Bush generally invokes little respect.

George Bush's political future, for good or for worse, is tied up with the success of the Reagan administration. He has stressed his strong loyalty to the President, which may well help him among Republicans. However the general public has become more sceptical of Reagan over the last year or so. With the loss of the Senate, the Iran/Contra affair, the Bork rejection and now the Wall Street tumble, Bush cannot avoid being identified with the failures of Reagan as well as his successes. He is the current front-runner for the G.O.P. nomination but I cannot help feel that many Democrats would like him to win because I don't think he has the style or substance to win the Presidency itself.

Robert Dole

Dole is the most formidable candidate the Republicans have to offer. He has less money and party support than Bush. He is also distrusted by conservatives despite his coddling of the anti-abortion movement and high-profile support for Bork and the contras. Apparently he appeals more moderate Republicans and better-educated conservatives, who probably recognize that Dole is the only major Republican in the race who appeals to liberals and independents.

Dole is a very deft politician who showed considerable skill as leader of the Senate from 1980-86. He is the best candidate for for Republicans who want experienced leadership without the sleaze and incompetence which has surfaced recently in the administration. I must admit to a sneaking admiration for the man's political skills. It's a shame he fell into such bad company... A Dole/anyone ticket would really worry the Democrats. My prediction is that, if nominated, Dole would win.

Jack Kemp

Kemp is a conservative true-believer. He runs on the optimistic notion that Americans can achieve anything they want. He is an enthusiastic Reagan acolyte, who mixes Kennedeyesque pizzazz (Jack French Kemp - even the initials are the same) with pitches for support from labour and minorities, whilst remaining firmly right wing.

It is a mark of Kemp's persistence that he managed to claw his way from being a mere Congressman to second place in the polls to George Bush. However he has lost considerable momentum since Dole's entry into the fray and now he's in a struggling third place position.

With Bush and Dole making a pitch for moderate Republicans, Kemp has been left to fight it out on the right with the other conservatives: Du Pont, Haig and Robertson. Unfortunately this means calling for \$300 in military aid to the contras, hailing Salvadoran death squads as saviours of democracy and criticising even Reagan's mild stab at disarmament.

Pat Robertson

Robertson is a worrying candidate, though probably more so for Republicans. For Democrats, Robertson is a godsend: a liberal bugbear who can be relied on to cause a flood of donations to the Democratic National Committee whenever he is featured in one of their mass mailings. For Republicans, the thought of Robertson supporters at the National Convention drooling at the mouth and gibbering about school prayer, criminalised abortion and support for South Africa must be truly terrifying.

Pat Robertson is the son of a former Senator, an Ivy League scholar and a prominent evangelical pentecostalist. He is the founder of the Christian Broadcasting Network where he has made a reputation for himself as a talk-show host. Robertson main strength is his command of a hardcore evangelical Christian following. Although his campaigners may not be large in number, they are deeply committed, producing a formidable war-chest (second only to Bush, I believe) and an excellent grassroots organisation. Recently, Robertson won a "straw poll" in Iowa. Since these events involve paying \$25 for the privilege of attending a social event and registering your vote, the poll really only measures the intensity of a candidates support not its size.

Robertson has no chance of winning. The danger for Republicans is that he will continue to pop up in the media and scare off moderate voters.

Pete Du Pont

Pete Du Pont was, in fact, the first Republican to declare his candidacy, though few people noticed.

Du Pont is the former governor of Delaware. He was previously fairly liberal but now he has emerged as a born-again conservative. Sadly, his "conversion" was sceptically received at an anti-abortion conference where he was booed.

His politics seem to be radically libertarian. He is notable for his view that farm subsidies should be eliminated and, unlike some Republicans, he is even prepared to take an axe to social security. He may be more liberal on social issues but so far he has not shown it. In debates, he has caved in to the prevailing Republican sentiment against abortion.

So far in the polls, Du Pont is amongst the stragglers. Personally, I can't see him going anywhere at all.

Alexander Haig

Like Robertson, Haig is a candidate with more negatives than positive support. He currently lags in last place in terms of fund raising and endorsements. His showing in the polls is no better.

In some respects this is rather sad since Haig does have extensive experience of government unlike administrative lightweights like Kemp and Robertson. However, Haig is not perceived as a seasoned administrator but instead as a grasping megalomaniac as a result of his bid for control at the White House immediately after the shooting of Reagan. For a candidate like Haig, who has no real base, gaffes like that are fatal. I've no doubt that Haig will flop badly.

Despite having enjoyed an eight-year, largely popular Presidency, I feel that the Republicans will have problems retaining the office in '88. Talk of a political realignment making the G.O.P. the majority party has been abandoned. The Democrats have nibbled away at the Republican gains of 1980 and 1984, regaining control of the Senate. Last week's off-year elections confirmed this trend with several good Democratic gains in my own state of New York and Democratic retention of the governorships of Kentucky, Mississippi and Louisiana.

Overall the conservatives seem to have lost their momentum. The Iran/Contra shook conservative foreign policy goals (despite a fleeting bout of "Ollie-mania") and the rejection of Bork showed that the liberals now have the stomach and ability to stand up to Reagan's social agenda.

However the election will probably be decided on bread and butter economic issues rather than concern over Nicaragua or the Supreme Court. The current Wall Street jitters have hurt badly the reputation of the Republicans to manage the economy. Even more so than ever there is a general desire for Presidential leadership. This should benefit the Democrats and Robert Dole...

On the whole the elction should turn out to be a fascinating contest. Neither party has the upper hand or a strong front-runner for the nomination even. Also the contest should settle into a relatively clear cut choice between a liberal and a conservative: contra aid, abortion, the Supreme Court will all be controversial issues. It will be a veritable feast for political junkies like myself.

My comments last issue provoked a response by Conrad von Metzke in Costaguana.

"Simon has been jaded by the fact that, in the U.S., a candidate is more often than not judged by his image than by his stand on most issues. Reagan is, of course, the classic example of a candidate with supreme issue-projecting ability and no other redeeming quality being swept into office over far more competent but much duller rivals."

I would strongly disagree here. Reagan made enough gaffes and blunders during his nomination bid and the election against Carter to belie the view that his image was faultless. More importantly, Reagan was able to ride a groundswell of conservative sentiment based on the fact that he was the candidate most identified with those issues. There was a definite, growing feeling that federal government was too involved in the economy and should "get off the backs of business". Problems in Iran and Afghanistan evoked support for increased defence spending and a hardline foreign policy. Finally a growing involvement of fundamentalist and other right-wing Chistian groups in politics provided a ready constituency for a candidate espousing opposition to liberal social trends like feminism, gay rights and abortion.

Of course not every candidate has the support of a solid constituency before seeking higher office. In fact, of the current contenders, only Robertson and Jackson have a hardcore following, while Bush, Dole and Dukakis have fairly solid bases. I couldn't see Jackson or Robertson being blown out of the race on the "character" issue alone like Hart and Biden were. Dukakis has weathered the Biden-knobbling scandal well, mostly due to skillful handling but partly also because of his regional strength and support of wealthy Greek-Americans. Reagan committed several gaffes during the 1980 campaign which would have destroyed the candidacy of a less entrenched politician. The fact that he could withstand the controversies he created, I feel, shows that he was more than just a good image.

If you'd like to read more on the relationship of image to substance in politics, I'd recommend you read "The Real Campaign" by Jeff Greenfield. The book examines the 1980 campaign with the view that the media and "character" issues do not determine political campaigns.

The reason why character issues have been so prominent recently is that most of the candidates have no real underpinnings of support and are thus very vulnerable. From what I gather there is far more dirt on Robertson and Jackson, which probably won't be used because it won't be effective. Also since all the Democrats are pretty liberal and all the Republicans are fairly conservative, there is not much to distinguish between them except their characters. Real debate of the issues will probably wait until after the nominations.

Moving back to Costaguana, I agree it is a shame that Babbitt seems to be going down the tubes. Judging by his reply recently to a question about the Supreme Court, he seems to be quite a wit.

ZINESZINESZINESZINESZINESZINESZINESZINESZINESZINES

I've received lots of impressive zines recently, so why not plug a few.

The best has been the latest issue of the Zine Register - the first compiled by its new editor, Ken Peel. Ken is continuing the ZR with style and substance. It remains the most comprehensive listing of North American zines while carrying on the tradition of keeping the information entertaining and fun to read. The layout is much improved. The typeface is larger, Ken makes good use of cartoons and spacefillers and the whole package is beautifully laser printed. But there is more. Since Ken has access to cheaper printing than I had, the price of the zine has been halved to a mere 75¢ and the frequency has been bumped up to every three months instead of every four. An excellent, assured piece of work and essential for anyone who'd like to find out more about the North American hobby. Ken Peel, 8708 First Avenue, #T2, Silver Spring, MD 20910

At least one candidate made a point of joking about Donald Ginsburg's nomination to the Supreme Court and his withdrawal today after it was disclosed that he had used marijuana.

Mr. Babbitt said that a voter had approached him and said: "You're the kind of Democrat who would appoint a bearded, pot smoking professor from Harvard to the Supreme Court."

"Well," Mr. Babbitt said, "Judge Ginsburg would have lent new meaning to the phrase, 'Highest Court in the land'."

Also worthy of mention is the latest Graustark. After several years of keeping his anti-war views under wraps, John Boardman now feels that the political climate has improved sufficiently recently for him to be more open about his politics. Graustark #542 contains an excellent article explaining his pacifism and denouncing recent military action in the Gulf. It's marvellous to see such views surfacing in the hobby again.

John Boardman, 234 East 19th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11226-5302

FROM

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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



YOUR CREDIT IS: TRADE

Final Victory for Merola

In New York City, the Democratic voting habit was so ingrained that Democrats, including one who died last week, won every one of 44 elections, including those for Bronx borough president, district attorney and surrogate.

The deceased candidate was Mario Merola, who was elected to a fifth term as Bronx District Attorney a week after he died of a cerebral hemorrhage.

Larry Peery

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DEADLINE: Saturday December 12th